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## **PRESS CLIPPINGS**

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### **ECONOMIC GROWTH**

**(Energy and Environment)**

#### **Read-Along marks 1st ‘storied’ year**

Kate V. Pedroso

**(Source: Philippine Daily Inquirer News Online – 5/11/08)**

OVER A HUNDRED CHILDREN JOINED THE Inquirer Read-Along’s first anniversary storytelling session Saturday which featured celebrity mom readers Lani Mercado and Daphne Oseña-Paez together with teachers from Sophia School in Bulacan and storytellers Rich Rodriguez and Regina Sevilla of Alitaptap.

The session, the 31st since the Read-Along began last year, was the culmination of a three-day anniversary celebration.

The anniversary was launched on Thursday with the unveiling of a photo exhibit of previous sessions. It also featured a two-day children’s book fair which kicked off the Inquirer Read-Along book drive.

With the theme “Amazing Moms, Amazing Year,” yesterday’s Read-Along featured heartwarming stories about motherhood in line with today’s celebration of Mother’s Day.



CELEBRITY mom Lani Mercado: Having six kids has honed my reading skills.

RODOLFO TORRES

Paez, who came with daughters Sophia and Lily and husband Patrick, read “Bakit Matagal ang Sundo Ko,” while Mercado, who came with her son Ram, read “Papel de Liha.”

The seven teachers from Sophia School in Meycauayan, Bulacan, led by their principal Ann Abacan, read “Si Pulong Patago-tago,” while the tandem of Rodriguez and Sevilla acted out the story “Pagong at Matsing” before the crowd of delighted kids and their parents.

“I always get nervous reading to kids because it’s hard to keep their attention,” said Paez after the session. “But I’ve read a few times, and I read to my own children. So I just did it the way I would read to [my kids].”

Paez’s daughters—5-year-old Sophia and 1-year-old Lily—gamely sat with the children in the audience to listen to their mother. “Sophia can’t sleep if I don’t read to her, while Lily is excited when she sees picture books,” Paez said.

After finishing her story, Paez, a television host, also related how her own mother changed her life through reading: “When I was younger, my mom heard me read out loud, and I wasn’t a good reader; I was always stuttering. So every night, she would let me read one paragraph from her book out loud,” she said. “I credit her with my becoming a broadcaster. If she’d never taught me, I’d still be so shy.”

### **Good feeling**

For Mercado, having six children has honed her experience as a reader.

“I have six children, so it’s easier for me to relate to kids and catch their attention,” she said.

“It’s a good feeling,” Mercado, wife of actor and Sen. Ramon “Bong” Revilla Jr., added. “It’s nice to be able give a little of my time. Besides, I really enjoy reading to children. When I want to teach some values to my kids, I get a book and read to them.”

If Rodriguez, a regular reader in past sessions, could make a wish for the Read-Along on its first anniversary, it would be for similar programs to take place every day. “If this would happen every day, we would have a better country. I hope there will be more kids who would not only read, but enjoy it as well,” he said.

His partner Sevilla added, “The Read-Along is a very good venue to promote the culture of reading that is slowly fading. I hope that in the future, children would be inspired not only to tell stories written by others but also to write their own stories.” The Sophia School teachers—Salie Lorico, Lorna Darilag, Rosalinda de la Vega, Mhayflor Fernando and Doray Carable—acted out their story and invited the

audience to act along with them. The teachers ended their performance with a song and dance number to “Say a Little Prayer.”

### **Passionate reader**

“We know it sounds passé, the saying that the children are the hope of this nation. But we believe that, and we hope that through storytelling we could educate Filipino children. May the efforts of the Read-Along contribute to make the Filipino children passionate readers,” said Abacan.

And 8-year-old John Bert Alipio may very well be on his way to being a passionate reader. “This is my first time to attend the Read-Along but I’ve already heard so much about it. I heard that the program is fun and educational. Now that I’ve attended it, I can say the same thing. This was a good experience. I want to come back and maybe even attend the next Read-Along anniversary,” said Alipio, who came with the Virilanie Foundation.

Yesterday’s celebration was held in cooperation with Virilanie, Hands on Manila, Ronald McDonald House Charities of McDonalds Philippines, Krispy Kreme, Scholastic and Abiva. The children also received books donated by Vibal and Adarna.

The Inquirer Read-Along was launched in May last year by the newspaper’s research department, library and Junior Inquirer to promote the love of reading among children through storytelling sessions with celebrities and volunteer readers. From the initial group of barely 20 kids, it has since reached thousands of children.

### **Star-studded**

The roster of celebrity readers included singer-actress Manilyn Reynes, University of the Philippines summa cum laude Mikaela Fudolig, teen stars Sam Concepcion and Cheska Ortega, basketball star Olsen Racela, TV personalities Christine Bersola-Babao and Maricel Laxa-Pangilinan, former Bb. Pilipinas-Universe Anna Theresa Licaros, Little Earth Angel Denise Mikaela Abuan, energy and environment chief of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Daniel Moore, former Ms Philippines-Earth Jeanne Harn, actor Dingdong Dantes, lawyer Weena Kapunan, child star BJ “Tolits” Forbes, US Ambassador Kristie Kenney, former



TV HOST Daphne Osena-Paez: I used to stutter as a kid until my own mom made me read aloud. ROQUE ROTON

senatorial candidate Sonia Roco, model-actress Donita Rose, Inquirer president Alexandra Prieto-Romualdez, Scholastic Philippines country vice president Melanie Belen.

### **Even more celebrities**

This 2008, even more personalities have been added to this list: Sen. Miguel Zubiri, race car driver Gaby de la Merced, Philippine Basketball Association commissioner Renault “Sonny” Barrios, cagers JC Intal and Ren-Ren Ritualo, veteran actor and TV host Tessie Tomas, actor-twins Dominic and Felix Roco, Manila City Councilor Bonjay Isip-Garcia, Starstruck survivor Iwa Moto, Ruffa Gutierrez, Pinoy Dream Academy grand winner Yeng Constantino, sportscaster Dominic Uy, singer siblings Nina and King, and US Embassy Deputy Chief of Mission Paul Jones.

And this is just the beginning of another year full of stories.

A special Read-Along session for Mother’s Day will be held today at the Mall of Asia Atrium featuring RJ Jimenez of Pinoy Dream Academy and Charlyn Chua of Alitaptap.

The next Read-Along program in the Inquirer main office will be held on May 24 with broadcaster Karen Davila as the reader.

Interested participants may contact Ellen Caparros or Girlie Refran at tel. 897-8808, local 329.